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Educational Television Series 1968-69

Teachers' Guide

Professional Development

HISTORY: THE PROGRAM IN ACTION

Educational Television Branch
ONTARIO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
1670 Bayview Avenue, Toronto 17

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

HISTORY: THE PROGRAM IN ACTION

5 programs, 20 minutes each

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INTRODUCTION

History is an academic discipline whose study, at the most sophisticated level, demands a high degree of scholarship and the possession of complex research skills. The purpose of study may vary from student to student: the philosopher of history may be searching for evidence of pattern or design in human existence; the political historian may seek the historical roots of current trends or developments. But essentially it is the subject which engages their interest, that is to say, the student finds satisfaction and fulfillment in the pursuit of historical knowledge.

In the secondary school, however, it is not our aim to train professional historians. If our students acquire a regard for history — for what it can tell us of human behaviour — it is a very useful result of their learning. But basically, history — like other areas of the curriculum — must justify its position on the curriculum of the secondary school. It contributes to the intellectual growth and fosters sympathetic understanding of the struggles and triumphs of nations and people. A study of history may enrich the mind of the learner, stimulate creative and critical thinking, develop an inquiring mind, and help the student grow as sympathetic, tolerant and alert human beings. If history is "presented" as a subject, as a body of information to be memorized, it will simply bore the learner.

The history lesson (assignment-recitation-assignment) has a long and honourable tradition in the secondary schools. And in the hands of imaginative teachers, it has often become a stimulating experience for students. Well-presented material and challenging questions can bring about real learning situations. But, in the opinion of teachers now, it is inadequate as a single method for providing a stimulating experience because it has very serious limitations.

Learning has meaning for the learner only if it is related to his own experience and interests. If we present subject matter to the student because we think he ought to learn it, we reckon without the student. Does *he* think he ought to learn it? Is it important to him? He may, under pressure of external motivation (e.g., examinations) commit the material to memory, and retain it until the crisis has passed. Such learning is superficial. Scholarship — the careful searching for evidence, the sorting of ideas, the spirit of intelligent inquiry — is non-existent.

Perhaps the first task of the teacher is to bring the subject matter and learner together. The learner — in secondary school — is a person of growing maturity, ever-widening experience, capable of grasping abstract ideas, and of seeing relationships which are not immediately evident — in a concrete sense. Therefore, it is possible to relate the content of history to his experience. His world is wide enough that he can relate past to present, understand cause and effect, and sometimes visualize events of long ago. The problem for teachers is to introduce the content in ways which students will enjoy and which will help them use and develop their abilities further.

The second task of the teacher is to find ways of involving the student in the learning — to see the relevance of historical events to the world in which he lives. This is not always easy, but it appears to be necessary if we want to help the student to apply his abilities and aptitudes to the full enjoyment of history. Too, often the student's role has been passive. He's been a listener, absorbing and memorizing what he has been told. Listening is a legitimate learning experience, indeed, a valuable one if used with discretion and if it spurs the listener to further learning activity. But other experiences often involve the students more deeply in learning. It is possible, for instance, for students to plan their own activities, seek out their own resource material, prepare reports, conduct independent investigations, and discuss their findings with their peers. Such activities call for the development of many kinds of skills, social and academic, which are important for living and continued independent living. The need for help in developing these skills often becomes evident when students involved in these activities flounder or produce results which are inadequate.

In the four secondary schools where tapings were done to provide material for these programs, it was evident that the philosophy expressed in this general introduction was shared by the teachers concerned. In each school, interesting and effective programs have been developed by the history staff to serve the dual purpose of making the history course important and interesting to the students, so that it becomes a learning experience rather than rote memorization of facts and dates.

Participating Teachers:

Mr. Bob Remnant
Mr. John Madk
Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School
Sudbury

Mr. John Stewart
Mr. Richard Austin
Barrie District North Collegiate Institute
Barrie

Mr. Don Thompson
Mr. C. D. Bell
Mr. J. Zarn
Central Peel Secondary School
Brampton

Mr. Bob Clark
Pauline Johnson Collegiate Institute
Brantford

PROGRAM I

A POSITIVE RESPONSE

Ideally, learning arises from the real experience of the students. At the secondary school level, however, much of the subject matter is not naturally related to their experiences or their interests. And history which may deal with events far removed from the vision of adolescents presents particular problems in this respect. If, therefore, it is to have any meaning for them and any value in contributing to their growth, a way must be found to relate the past to the present, vividly. There is no use telling young people that it is a good

thing to know the heritage of the past, or that a knowledge of our history makes them into better citizens. Perhaps, these statements are true, but they don't impress apathetic adolescents asked to memorize large quantities of facts.

In this program we observe students enjoying a number of experiences which help them develop a lively interest in the historical problems. We see a discussion to introduce a new unit, a lecture followed by a discussion and a lively discussion which follows the viewing of two contemporary films. In each case it is evident that the learning has become important to the students.

PROGRAM 2

PROBLEMS TO SOLVE

At Barrie District North Collegiate Institute the formal lesson has been largely displaced in favour of the problem-solving method. And in this program, Mr. Stewart, the head of the department, explains the method for us. The curriculum is broken into units which become the object of research, group activity and discussion among the students. The teacher introduces the unit, using some method such as a review or discussion to establish a set for the learning. Then the students are given assignment sheets which define a number of problems pertaining to the theme of the unit. And from this point the students accept responsibility for the learning, the teachers acting as guides and resource persons. If a teacher chooses to carry this approach to a higher level of involvement, the students, after assembling and discussing preliminary information, would then help to identify the problems which they wished to pursue in greater depth.

PROGRAM 3

INTEGRATION

Many educators have long felt that the division of knowledge into subject-fields for teaching purposes, denies the universality of knowledge. It is true that each discipline has its own content, but no area of knowledge is complete in itself. Recognizing this fact, three departments at Central Peel Secondary School in Brampton have pooled resources in an experimental program to integrate their subject areas. Only one group — the Grade 12 form — studying the art option — is involved so far, but the hope is to extend the program to other students. Art, history and English are the areas involved, and experiences are designed to help students see relationships among them. A common type of initial experience in this school, for instance, is the viewing of a contemporary film. Recently, the group saw the film, "Lord of the Flies". Its theme (order to chaos to a new order) was made the basis of historical study, of literary analysis, and art appreciation.

Together with the integration of disciplines in this school, another experiment continues. The students sometimes plan the learning — its aims, its methods — and accept almost total responsibility for its results.

This program presents brief taped episodes illustrating learning in action. Attention is concentrated almost entirely on the students to illustrate the very large part they play.

PROGRAM 4

IN OUR OWN BACKYARD

A very important area of the curriculum is local history. It is close to the student; he may be involved because of family connections, and visual evidence of the past is often all around him. So it is less abstract, more meaningful, and sometimes more interesting. Mr. Bob Clark at Pauline Johnson Collegiate Institute in Brantford makes full use of the area's rich historical resources: or rather, his students do. They write the history of old buildings; study archives to learn about the beginnings of Brantford; interview survivors of other eras; write reports on social customs and economic developments; and read imaginative literature relating to the local past.

In this program you will see a number of brief episodes illustrating some of the learning activities: an examination of pictures to make inferences about the area's first inhabitants; a report on the life of Brantford a century ago; a look at a nineteenth century commercial enterprise; a progress report about a number of projects; and the discussion of a novel with a local background.

PROGRAM 5

PARTNERS

This program examines the teaching-learning situation as reflected in the roles of the teacher, and of the student. It is obvious that the role of the teacher has changed and that students have been given, or have accepted, a greater responsibility for their learning.

This program points out however, that in this changed situation the teacher did not abdicate. His role, is a positive one which demands great skill, much learning, acute sensitivity, and a high degree of flexibility. The student is given greater freedom and greater responsibility. The questions are asked, "Can he, or does he use his freedom in a mature manner?" "Is he ready to accept the responsibility?" The teachers whose students are seen in these tapings would answer in the affirmative. The teacher senses the degree of maturity of his students, individually and collectively, allots greater responsibility to those who are likely to respond well to the challenge, and protects the less mature from overextending themselves while providing opportunities for them to increase their skills and confidence.

The program is really a summary of the whole series. In a sense it deals with the factors which are common to all four secondary schools. In spite of the differences in content, in method, and in grade level, these teachers have all stressed the fact that learning has to start with the student — that it must meet his needs, interests and abilities. They are all concerned with his involvement in learning through discovery.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
The History Program in Action
5 programs, 20 minutes each

Prog. No.	CBC 10:10-10:30	CHCH 10:10-10:30	CKCO 9:40-10:00	CJOH 12:40-1:00	CBOT 10:10-10:30	CKLW 10:10-10:30
1	OCT. 19 NOV. 1 – 10:05-10:25	OCT. 19	OCT. 19	OCT. 19	OCT. 19	OCT. 19
2	OCT. 26 NOV. 8	OCT. 26	OCT. 26	OCT. 26	OCT. 26	OCT. 26
3	NOV. 2 NOV. 15	NOV. 2	NOV. 2	NOV. 2	NOV. 2	NOV. 2
4	NOV. 9 NOV. 22	NOV. 9	NOV. 9	NOV. 9	NOV. 9	NOV. 9
5	NOV. 23 NOV. 29	NOV. 16	NOV. 23	NOV. 23	NOV. 23	NOV. 23

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